



PRECAUTIONS TO KEEP SUMMER FUN AND ENJOYABLE!

This issue of *Montana Public Health* offers important prevention steps to keep summer healthy for Montanans.

Mosquitos Warm weather and increased outdoor activity increase risk for mosquito-borne diseases, including West Nile Virus. A little knowledge of mosquito ecology accompanied by appropriate precaution can help people protect themselves. Mosquito numbers peak in late July and early August, but danger exists from mid-June through September. Mosquitoes lay eggs in almost anything that holds water, from buckets and birdbaths to marshes and ponds, so whether persons are barbecuing in their backyard or camping at a lake, they may be at risk.

Prevention Steps: Protection comes from eliminating mosquito breeding habitat around homes and by avoiding mosquito bites. Minimize risk by wearing protective clothing and using insect repellants. Limit outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active. The CDC recommends use of products containing DEET for effective mosquito repellant action for adults and children over 2 months in age.

Snakes and insects Snake bites and bites/stings by insects caused many emergency department (ED) visits and hospital admissions during 2010 through 2012. Twenty-nine ED visits and 22 hospital admissions resulted from snake bites and 160 ED visits and 15 hospital admissions from spider bites. The majority of the snake bites (59%) occurred in July and August and all but 2 (4%) during May through October; 79% of the spider bites occurred during May through October. Stings by bees, hornets and wasps caused 1642 ED visits and 8 hospital admissions; 93% of these stings occurred during May through October and 70% in August and September. Males were bitten by snakes three times more often than were females but there was no substantial difference by sex in spider bites or insect stings.

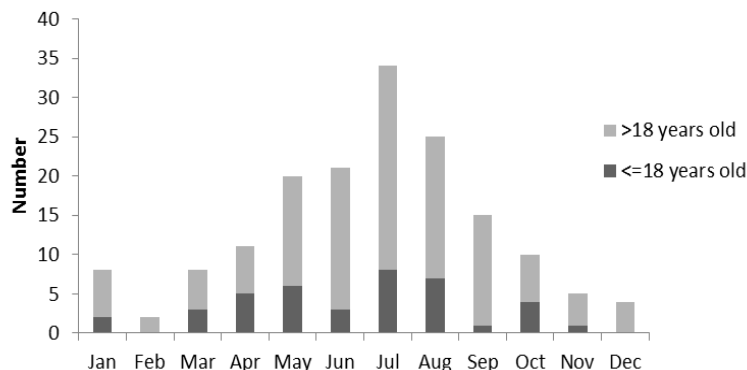
Prevention Steps: To avoid snake bites avoid places where snakes may live; when moving through tall grass or weeds poke at the ground in front of you with a long stick to scare away snakes, watch where you step or sit; shine a flashlight on your path when walking at night; and never handle a snake.

To prevent insect bites and stings apply insect repellent (according to directions) before going into the woods or areas you may contact insects; wear light-colored, long-sleeved, long-legged clothing; avoid wearing perfumed lotions or scented hair products during warm months; avoid flowering plants; and do not put your picnic out until you are ready to eat. If you have a severe allergic reaction to insect bites have someone else mow lawns and clip hedges, and talk to your doctor about being prepared for an allergic reaction.

Water safety Drowning is a preventable cause of death. Of the 163 unintentional drowning deaths during 2005 through 2012, 100 (61%) occurred during May through September (Figure 1). Of these summer drownings, 90 (90%) were in outdoor bodies of water (including boat related drownings). Alcohol and water recreation do not mix, especially if young children are present. Excess use of alcohol by adults leads to inadequate supervision of children and unwise judgment by adults.

Prevention Steps: To prevent drownings never leave children alone around water; supervise children carefully (put the cell phone away; don't drink in excess); know how to swim and teach children how to swim; learn CPR; take a safe boating course; wear a life jacket (don't just carry it).

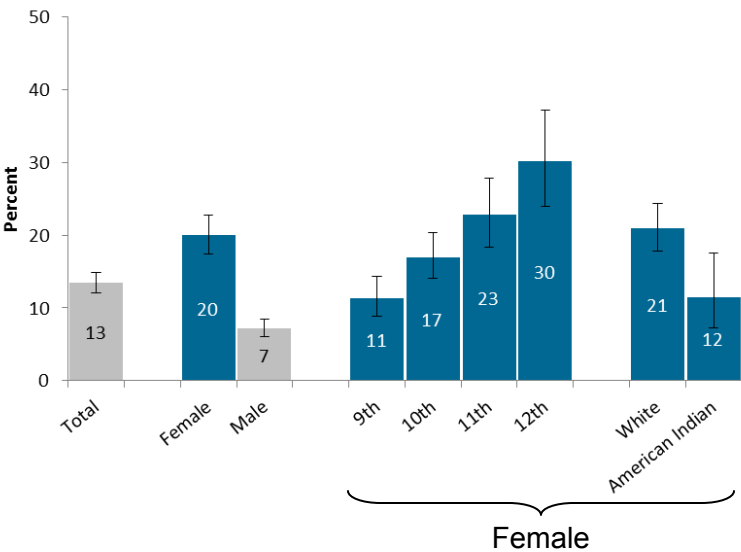
Figure 1. Number of unintentional deaths due to drowning and submersion, Montana, 2005-2012



Protection from ultraviolet light From 2008 through 2012, approximately 265 Montanans were diagnosed with melanoma each year.¹ During these years approximately 30 adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15 and 39 years were diagnosed with melanoma each year.¹ Two out of three melanoma cases in this age group occurred among women. Between 65% to 90% of melanomas are caused by exposure to ultraviolet light.² Melanoma that occurs at a young age may indicate excessive, intermittent exposure to UV light (from sources such as sun or indoor tanning devices) among individuals prone to developing melanoma.³ In 2013, one in five high school girls reported using an indoor tanning device (Figure 2).⁴ Use of indoor tanning devices became more prevalent with increasing grade among female high school students (Figure 2).⁴

Prevention Steps: To reduce the risk of melanoma, it is recommended that Montanans be sun A.W.A.R.E. Avoid unprotected exposure to sunlight, seek shade, and never indoor tan. Wear sun protective clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses year-round. Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sunburn protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Routinely examine your whole body for changes in your skin and report concerns to a healthcare provider.

Figure 2. Percent of high school students in Montana who reported that they used an indoor tanning device* one or more times in the past 12 months⁴, 2013



*Such as a sunlamp, sunbed, or tanning booth

Educate your family and community about the need to be Sun A.W.A.R.E.

Recommendations

Recommendations for prevention steps are included in the text in this issue of *Montana Public Health*

For more information,

References available on web version. Visit <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/publications.shtml>

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